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Title: Review of Aesth-ethics: Of Hospitality in Art by Dror Pimentel
Author: Jørgen Steen Veisland
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Review of Aesth-ethics: Of Hospitality in Art by Dror Pimentel

Review of *Aesth-ethics: Of Hospitality in Art* by Dror Pimentel, translated by Talya Halkin (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2024). 294 pp. Softbound. ISBN: 978-3-031-65845-7.

Professor Dror Pimentel's *Aesth-ethics* is a ground-breaking study of the hosting of Being in the artwork. The reader is conducted through a lucid discussion and an innovative analysis of major works in the literary genres, with an emphasis on poetry, as well as analyses constituting a singular approach to painting and sculpture.

The author distinguishes between original or primordial Being which he relates to the Hebrew concept of *rav.* Being is here characterized by a primal, forceful disorderliness, and is conceived as an internal and external state of flux; it is a manifold Being without spatial and temporal limits. In the same-other dialectic it is disclosed as the Other. Being as Otherness exposes it to exclusion – oddly, because it is already present in the Same as difference from sameness. Professor Pimentel discusses Jacques Derrida's concept of *the supplement* as that which is always added, perhaps in a surreptitious manner, to the same, constituting that which Søren Kierkegaard names repetition in his work of that title *(Repetition;* 1843*),* where Kierkegaard, or rather, his pseudonym Constantin Constantius states that "repetition is the new". The same may never be repeated as identical to itself. I see this basic insight as the basis for the always present, clandestine, or, as Freud would have it, subconscious inclusion and intrusion of the Other into the psychic and sociocultural order of the Oedipal Father. The Oedipal Father who instigates the home, the family and *homo economicus* in flagrant opposition to the primordial Father who may have been murdered but who persists due to the dual power of subliminal libidinal forces and the primal ontological forces emanating from original Being, from nature and from the human subject.

Professor Pimentel skillfully posits the subject-object dialectic within this conceptual framework of Being, subject and subjectivity belonging to original Being and object and objectivity ruling over Being in the Oedipal phase, oppressing it and alienating it. The re-admission of subjectivity into a social order characterized by commodity fetichism, i.e., exchange-value in lieu of use-value, is to occur in the artwork, in what Herbert Marcuse refers to as the aesthetic dimension. One-dimensional man must become three-dimensional again by engaging in hospitality, that is, in the hosting of the Other within the premises of the Same, thus revolutionizing Same and Self by including the Other, at least for the moment during which the artwork is disclosed as truth. Heidegger's concept of truth as that which is disclosed, *aletheia,* penetrates to the core of the home-homeless dialectic, a dynamic relation analyzed, as Dror Pimentel notes, by Freud in the essay *Das Unheimliche, The Uncanny* (1919). The lack of a home, homelessness, is, however, not a state of unknowing. For the German *heimlich* means homely as well as secret. *Unheimlich* thus becomes that which is disclosed *within* the home, the domestic sphere, a secret intruding agent that cannot be excluded.

As Professor Pimentel argues, primordial Being, *rav,* is hosted in the artwork. The hosting takes the form of an inherent, internal

presence of Being in the human subject whose subjectivity is now most adequately expressed in the work of art, enriching it with an ethical dimension. The infinite, timeless play of the signifier in search of a signified that corresponds to original Being occurs in writing, the novel, drama, and most of all in poetry. In Emily Dickinson's poem "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –" (1862; 1898) the buzzing sound is a signifier defying signification yet including it as Otherness. This example of my own agrees totally with Professor Pimentel's brilliant analyses of a range of artworks, among them Franz Kafka's works where we come across the enigmatic figure of the *odradek,* a lifeless object, a spool of thread that comes to life and may be envisioned as weaving a tapestry like Penelope's: the thread is the thread of Kafka's own narrative work. The *odradek* is inherently present as a Being not to be identified or named except by a word imbued with a nameless, foreign Being. Dror Pimentel's interpretation of Anselm Kiefer's painting *Your Golden Hair Margarete* is an exemplary analysis of the German obsession with the Golden Past, always threatened by the presence of Shulamith, the excluded Jew and the ashes of the Holocaust. Exclusion and annihilation is present in this painting as an impossibility, a self-imposed act by the German Nazi that will haunt the Nazi home of the past as the spectre of gold turned into ash. Professor Pimentel provides a singular interpretation of Joseph Beuys' *Fat Chair,* seeing the substance of fat as the unshaped, formless Being attempting to invade the domestic space, symbolized by the chair. Dror Pimentel calls attention to the implicit irony of the fat-chair dialectic. The ironic dialogue taking place between the chair and the fat is a conversation as to who is to dominate in the confrontation, the formless or the form. - Rilke's *The Archaic Body of Apollo* is subjected to an especially innovative analysis by Professor Pimentel, as the torso is analyzed as a seeing body endowed with a gaze emanating from a unified site of knowledge, an insight inherent in the human subject, internally present and at the same time externally present as an aesthetical *cum* ethical act. The ethics of the act of seeing may be explained as the hosting of truth and beauty in the artwork.

Professor Pimentel's comprehensive work culminates in an analysis of John Keats' poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn"(1820). The first lines of the poem encapsulate, in Pimentel's opinion, the frozen form of the poem: "Thou still unravished bride of quietness,/Thou foster-child of silence and slow time, [….]". Dror Pimentel comments that Nietzsche's Dionysian ecstasy which the philosopher pits against the socioeconomic order and against the petrification of representation, is difficult but not impossible to detect in the poem. A line towards the end of the poem may serve to re-evaluate the signifier's kiss of death: "Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss, [….]" is Keats' subtle language game in which, in Professor Pimentel's words, "The signifier indeed kills life in its midst, yet its kiss of death also renders the signified eternal, [….]". Thus represention, the artwork, may be a time-bound stillness and a silence of death; yet it is also a buzzing fly emitting the sound of the Other, Wallace Stevens' "sound of the land", the "nothing that is" ("The Snow Man"; 1921); and Walt Whitman's *real Me,* present only in the miscellaneous fragments left on the shore by the ocean of life ("As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life"; 1855). The artwork *is hospitality* through the very presence of form and substance.

Jørgen Steen Veisland[1]

[1] University of Gdańsk.

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Correspondence: Jørgen Steen Veisland, email: jorgen.veisland@ug.edu.pl.
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